

§ 113A-126. Injunctive relief and penalties.

(a) Upon violation of any of the provisions of this Article or of any rule or order adopted under the authority of this Article the Secretary may, either before or after the institution of proceedings for the collection of any penalty imposed by this Article for such violation, institute a civil action in the General Court of Justice in the name of the State upon the relation of the Secretary for injunctive relief to restrain the violation and for a preliminary and permanent mandatory injunction to restore the resources consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. If the court finds that a violation is threatened or has occurred, the court shall, at a minimum, order the relief necessary to prevent the threatened violation or to abate the violation consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to such proceedings from any penalty prescribed by this Article for any violation of same.

(b) Upon violation of any of the provisions of this Article relating to permits for minor developments issued by a local government, or of any rule or order adopted under the authority of this Article relating to such permits, the designated local official may, either before or after the institution of proceedings for the collection of any penalty imposed by this Article for such violation, institute a civil action in the General Court of Justice in the name of the affected local government upon the relation of the designated local official for injunctive relief to restrain the violation and for a preliminary and permanent mandatory injunction to restore the resources consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. If the court finds that a violation is threatened or has occurred, the court shall, at a minimum, order the relief necessary to prevent the threatened violation or to abate the violation consistent with this Article and rules of the Commission. Neither the institution of the action nor any of the proceedings thereon shall relieve any party to such proceedings from any penalty prescribed by this Article for any violation of same.

(c) Any person who shall be adjudged to have knowingly or willfully violated any provision of this Article, or any rule or order adopted pursuant to this Article, shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. In addition, if any person continues to violate or further violates, any such provision, rule or order after written notice from the Secretary or (in the case of a permit for a minor development issued by a local government) written notice from the designated local official, the court may determine that each day during which the violation continues or is repeated constitutes a separate violation subject to the foregoing penalties.

- (d) (1) A civil penalty of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for a minor development violation and ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for a major development violation may be assessed by the Commission against any person who:
- a. Is required but fails to apply for or to secure a permit required by G.S. 113A-118, or who violates or fails to act in accordance with the terms, conditions, or requirements of such permit.
 - b. Fails to file, submit, or make available, as the case may be, any documents, data or reports required by the Commission pursuant to this Article.
 - c. Refuses access to the Commission or its duly designated representative, who has sufficiently identified himself by displaying official credentials, to any premises, not including any occupied dwelling house or curtilage, for the purpose of conducting any investigations provided for in this Article.
 - d. Violates a rule of the Commission implementing this Article.

- (2) For each willful action or failure to act for which a penalty may be assessed under this subsection, the Commission may consider each day the action or inaction continues after notice is given of the violation as a separate violation; a separate penalty may be assessed for each such separate violation.
- (3) The Commission shall notify a person who is assessed a penalty or investigative costs by registered or certified mail. The notice shall state the reasons for the penalty. A person may contest the assessment of a penalty or investigative costs by filing a petition for a contested case under G.S. 150B-23 within 20 days after receiving the notice of assessment. If a person fails to pay any civil penalty or investigative cost assessed under this subsection, the Commission shall refer the matter to the Attorney General for collection. An action to collect a penalty must be filed within three years after the date the final decision was served on the violator.
- (4) In determining the amount of the civil penalty, the Commission shall consider the following factors:
 - a. The degree and extent of harm, including, but not limited to, harm to the natural resources of the State, to the public health, or to private property resulting from the violation;
 - b. The duration and gravity of the violation;
 - c. The effect on water quality, coastal resources, or public trust uses;
 - d. The cost of rectifying the damage;
 - e. The amount of money saved by noncompliance;
 - f. Whether the violation was committed willfully or intentionally;
 - g. The prior record of the violator in complying or failing to comply with programs over which the Commission has regulatory authority; and
 - h. The cost to the State of the enforcement procedures.
- (4a) The Commission may also assess a person who is assessed a civil penalty under this subsection the reasonable costs of any investigation, inspection, or monitoring that results in the assessment of the civil penalty. For a minor development violation, the amount of an assessment of investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or one thousand dollars (\$1,000), whichever is less. For a major development violation, the amount of an assessment of investigative costs shall not exceed one-half of the amount of the civil penalty assessed or two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), whichever is less.
- (5) The clear proceeds of penalties assessed pursuant to this subsection shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. (1973, c. 1284, s. 1; 1975, c. 452, s. 5; 1977, c. 771, s. 4; 1981, c. 932, s. 2.1; 1983, c. 485, ss. 1-3; c. 518, s. 6; 1987, c. 827, ss. 11, 143; 1991, c. 725, s. 6; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 839, s. 3; c. 890, s. 8; 1993, c. 539, s. 874; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-215, s. 53(a); 2006-229, s. 1; 2011-398, s. 38.)